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## BRITISH RULE IN INDIA.

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THE history of England's contact with India during the last century and a half is the record of, perhaps, the most stupendous work accomplished by any nation in the progress of the human race.

The writer, an American citizen, has spent the last two decades amid the thrilling scenes of this work, has studied it with keen interest and has participated in its blessings. To one who has enjoyed, and is still enjoying, these privileges, the failure of many in the United States to appreciate this work of Great Britain, and their persistent determination to charge her with supreme selfishness and inhumanity in her Indian rule, seem inexplicable.

The writer holds no brief for the Anglo-Indian; nor is he ignorant of the weaknesses of that dignitary. But he is convinced that few men are doing a larger work, under adverse circumstances, for the progress of the human race than this same self-exiled Britisher among an alien race.

### I.

To appreciate England's work in India one must realize its immense difficulty. Here, then, are about thirty-five million people, reaching across more than seven thousand miles of watery space to grasp a land which is more than twelve times the size of their home land, and half as large as the whole of the United States. Within this semi-continent, this foreign race exercises supreme power over a people eight times its own number—a population which embraces fully one-fifth of the inhabitants of the globe. Nor is this vast population homogeneous. It is the home of a large number of conflicting tribes and nations, speaking different

tongues and imbued with caste animosities and ancestral dissensions. The warlike Sikh, the defiant Pathan, the subtle and wily Mahratti, the suave and intellectual Baboo, the stolid and effeminate Dravidian, and the barbarous hill man—these and many other different races have to be yoked together in the great chariot of state—a relationship which they have never before sustained to each other.

Religiously, also, they are as diverse as possible. While three-fourths of all the people are Hindu in religion, it must not be forgotten that this remarkable faith, which unites its votaries together in some respects, in others, which are most vital to a secular government, it divides them into numberless mutually antagonistic sects which make united action all but impossible. And though the Hindus are far in the ascendant, so far as numbers are concerned, the Mohammedans, with their nearly sixty million souls (many more than are found in all the realm of the Turkish Sultan), and with their much more united front, religious bigotry and bold, unyielding spirit, are a source of more anxiety to, and are objects of more conciliation on the part of, the government than are all the other elements put together. Add to these the more than two and a half million Christians, and the fewer, but still multitudinous, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsees. Add again the nearly ten millions of Animists and fetish worshippers, and we are only at the beginning of the religious classification of this people.

To one who believes that, religiously, the teeming millions of this land are docile and tractable, it is only necessary to refer to the faith origin of the terrible mutiny of 1857. Even the stubborn war with the frontier tribes had more the character of a *jihad* than the government is willing to confess. Whatever may have been its origin, it was doubtless largely fed and maintained by the religious sentiments of those doughty hill tribe Mohammedans, who have been feeling for some time that Christianity is the mortal foe of their faith. Moreover, the notable state of uneasiness among the inhabitants, in view of government's well meant effort to stamp out the terrible plague which is infesting the land, is purely a matter of religion. The cry of the Sepoy Mutiny is again revived and government is charged with trying to destroy the souls of the people by the sanitary process of inoculation against the plague. It is not the first time that

sanitary precautions in this land have been pronounced the enemy of faith and the ruin of the soul. When superstition joins hands with dirt, to antagonize progress and health in an Oriental country, it is high time that the government prepare for a mighty struggle in behalf of its own safety. The recent riots and other manifestations of disloyalty in three of the leading cities of India testify to this, and add to the already numerous illustrations which the country affords that the rule of the East by the West is an exceedingly difficult and dangerous matter.

The striking contrast of type and character existing between the Anglo-Saxon and the Hindu, facilitates all sorts of misunderstanding between them, and aids perceptibly in making the path of the British Raj a very thorny one in the land. It would, perhaps, be impossible to find two peoples who are farther removed from each other in temperament and training—whose natures and antecedents are more irreconcilable at all points. While the Anglo-Indian is bold, frank and just, even to brutality, the Hindu is subtle, affable, too practiced in dissimulation, with ready susceptibilities to temporize and to barter justice for expediency. On the one side, we see the Westerner haughty, unyielding and unwilling to conciliate; on the other we behold the Oriental willing to be trampled upon, when it seems necessary, and to smile with apparent gratitude under the process; but, withal, possessed of a large inheritance of ineradicable prejudices, which make a contact with his too domineering Western lord an unceasing trial to him. Perhaps the most marvelous thing about an Englishman in a foreign land, is his unwillingness to adapt himself to the people or the clime of his new habitation. He clings with tenacity to his home ideas and habits, as if they were of universal application. He adheres with rigid faithfulness to his ale, whiskey and beef in a tropical clime, when every rule of health cries aloud against them. An Englishman died not far from where the writer now lives. It was an unnatural death, and the natives of that region built a shrine in the jungle, near the place of his decease, and offered for years, in true sobriety, whiskey and cheroots to appease his thirsty and unsatisfied spirit. It is not strange that the native should recognize a continuity of spirit-taste in the here and the hereafter of the Sahib.

Another point at which the two races are antipodal is that of general aspect. The Britisher is a progressive to the core. He

only needs to be assured that a certain course is right and for the best interest of the community in order to adopt it. His face ever looks upward and his ambition is ever to go forward. But here he lives among a race whose chief divinity is custom, and the gist of whose decalogue is, "Hold fast to the past." As they approach a proposed enterprise their first and last question concerning it is not whether it is right and best, but whether it is in a line with the past, and would be approved by their ancestors. The whole country has been anchored for the last twenty-five centuries to a code of social laws and customs which are more unyielding than the laws of the Medes and Persians. Manu and his laws have thus been the curse of the ages to them. Among a people the chief ambition of whose young men is to be like their grandfathers, and where conservatism is the acme of piety and propriety, it is no wonder that, during the last century, all progress has been practically forced upon the country from without, and in the teeth of their most sacred institutions and their most earnest protestation and opposition.

It had doubtless been well for the Anglo-Indian in India, had he had an occasional eye for the excellences and prejudices of the Orient, and had he not been so cock sure of his supreme wisdom and unquestionable superiority in all points wherein he differed from the Hindu, and had he not so frequently trifled with the deepest sentiments and ridden roughshod over the dearest customs of the Hindu. But his experience has not been in vain, and he is not what he once was in this particular; even though this weakness is now regarded by the Hindu as the most serious complaint against him. At the same time, it must be confessed that a large compliance with the most deep rooted and universal customs and prejudices of the land would render an advanced and progressive government all but impossible.

Another of the serious embarrassments which stand ready to overwhelm any attempt at an able and effective rule in this land, is the deep poverty of the people.

"It is finance which lies at the base of every difficulty connected with our Indian Empire," is the sapient remark of Sir Charles Dilke. And at the base of the financial difficulty lies the penury of the people. Great Britain is not prepared to administer the affairs of state in India from the same motives as keep in operation its Christian missions—from a self-denying benevolence. Nor does

it seem that a much cheaper administration would be either good or economical. She must find a *quid pro quo*; and the large number of men of fine training, integrity and administrative power whom she sends out to this far off tropical land must be paid adequately, if not handsomely, for their toil, danger and exile. It is a very doubtful question whether, beyond a reduction in the army, and a lessening of the high salaries of native officials, England could safely bring down the expenses of its present *régime*. And yet it is true that the country is groaning under the burden, and can ill afford so expensive a government. It is a well known and lamentable fact that one-fifth of the whole population, say 60,000,000, or a total nearly equal the population of the United States, are insufficiently fed, even in ordinary years of prosperity. They are the ever ready prey of the first drought, distress or famine that may happen. It is a not uncommon experience of the ryot to retire at night upon an empty stomach.

It does not help, but rather aggravates, the situation to be told that most of this evil which the people bear is self-imposed. They reveal a combination of blind improvidence, reckless expenditure and an unwillingness to shake off impoverishing customs. For instance, the debt incurring propensity of the native is akin to insanity. Hardly a member of the community is free from debt. In fact, it is believed by the ordinary man here that a debt incurred is a true badge of respectability. All the poor people with whom the writer is acquainted are tied hand and foot to this terrible millstone. And the interest paid is crushing. An employee once told the writer of his terrible burdens. One was an interest of one rupee paid monthly on a sum of \*Rs. 30, borrowed in distress. The interest had then been paid regularly for several years and was not considered an exceptional rate, neither, indeed, is it. The hereditary village money lender is a most rapacious and heartless Shylock. It is rare that a poor farmer who gets into his clutches escapes the dreadful bondage. It usually leads to the loss of all property and means of support. Under the ancient Hindu law, no money lender could recover interest on a loan beyond the amount of principal which he had advanced. Under the present rule he can recover to any amount, sell the tenant's crop, and even take possession of the land under a judgment decree. It is one of those instances where justice in law is made to admin-

\* A rupee is nominally worth 40 cents but is actually worth only 30 cents.

ister to unrighteousness and cruelty in life. This evil certainly represents a present serious political danger. The extent may be realized from the statement of the last census report, that in Assam nearly 68 per cent., in the Northwest Provinces nearly 47 per cent., in the Central Provinces nearly 37 per cent., in Bombay 31 per cent., and in Madras 18 per cent. of the landlords are of the money lender class.

The people, moreover, are given to the most extravagant expenses at marriages and funerals. It is frequently the case that a man spends upon the marriage of a son or daughter—the latter especially—more than a whole year's income. The writer knows many who are hopelessly overwhelmed with debts incurred by the marriage of their children. And the saddest thing about it is that they have little option in this expense, which is prescribed and enforced by caste customs. For this reason most of the efforts put forth to reform this evil have been fruitless. It should also be added that this money is loaned and spent in vain, childish show, and in universal feasting, which leaves not a solid blessing behind.

Nor can another marked feature of Indian life be omitted here; and that is the rank growth, under the fostering care of religious teaching and superstition, of religious mendicancy. There are 5,200,000 of such lazy, worthless fellows encumbering this land to-day. The mass of them are sleek in body and pestilential in morals. The people are filled with mingled fear of and superstitious reverence for them; so that they will yield to their threats and give to them their last morsel. You meet this pest everywhere; he is as ubiquitous as the soldier in Italy. Whenever a man finds work too hard, he dons the yellow cloth of the religious mendicant and becomes an immediate success! But alas for the community! Hindu charity is proverbial, but it is blinder than love itself. It gives, but never intelligently, and thus fosters everywhere laziness and imposture. Such a body of worthless consumers would tax even a wealthy land. To India it is a dreadful burden and a drain.

Add to this, as another source of their poverty, the insane passion for jewels which consumes both high and low. Millions of rupees' worth of gold flows into the country annually, and most of it is melted and converted into personal adornments for women and children. For this purpose nearly half a million goldsmiths,

according to the last census, are engaged and make a comfortable living at an annual expense of nearly thirty million rupees. This is a much larger force of workmen than that of all the blacksmiths in the land. All this vast treasury of gold is entirely unproductive property and leads to much litigation and to many murders.

The litigious spirit of the people also is phenomenal. It is doubtful whether any other people on earth spend, relative to their means, in legal processes, more than Hindus. It would sometimes seem as if the lawyer, whose name is legion, is, next to the money lender, the most highly favored man in the land.

In view of all these facts, Sir W. W. Hunter's statement that "the permanent remedies for the poverty of India rest with the people themselves," is eminently true. And it is further emphasized by the following remark of Sir Madhava Ras, K. C. S. I., one of the very few statesmen that India has produced among its own children: "The longer one lives, observes and thinks, the more deeply does he feel there is no community on the face of the earth which suffers less from political evils and more from self-inflicted or self-accepted, or self-created, and, therefore avoidable evils, than the Hindu community."

But it is not so much the cause or causes of this universal poverty, as it is the existence of it, which concerns us at present. In the midst of such widespread and oppressing impecuniosity, it is doubtful whether there is enough wealth in the land to pay for so expensive a luxury as an intelligent, honest, efficient government. And yet we are convinced, notwithstanding the loud-mouthed protests of the enemies of Great Britain in this land, and the warning of some of her friends, too, that the highest prosperity of India and her ultimate redemption from indigence, also, must for a long time to come spring not from a cheapened native administration, but from the most efficient and vigilant and progressive *régime* that Great Britain can produce. The natural resources of the country are great and must be developed, and the people raised, even against their will, to a higher life by the mighty and progressive Anglo-Saxon.

Above and beyond these difficulties lies that of the rapid increase of population, which, under the peace, protection and sanitary improvements of the State, is a growing embarrassment. Every Ramasamy thinks that, whatever other blessings and functions may be withheld from him, a wife or two is his inalienable



right, and the procreation of his kind a God-given duty which he must not ignore. Moreover, it is regarded that no greater curse can befall a girl here below than that of not being asked in marriage, and no misfortune equal to that of barrenness. The consequence is that few young men and no grown up girls are found unmarried. The thought whether a bridegroom is able to support, or ever will be able to support, his wife and the inevitable family is to them absolutely irrelevant at such a time. Alas! how many times the writer has seen a bright girl tied for life to an imbecile to propagate his imbecility; and others sold in bondage to disease-rotted husbands only to disseminate, through their wretched offspring, the penalty of the father's or grandfather's sins. Thus millions of people thoughtlessly and criminally rush into the realm of parentage, only to multiply their miserable and unworthy kind, and to foist them upon an already crowded land to be a care and a burden to the State. The observing philosopher in India often asks himself whether Malthus was not, after all, right, and whether his theory might not find wise application in this land. At all events, the present outlook is alarming, as it points to a no distant future when the three hundred millions of to-day shall become doubled and the problem of life shall be vastly more complicated. And yet this difficulty confronts the State as a direct result of its success in the preservation of countless human lives that have been thrust upon it by unworthy people, and, in most cases, under the stress of senseless social customs and false religious teachings.

Famine, also, is an oft recurring and most perplexing evil with which this land has always been familiar. In times past it was the gaunt avenger which decimated the people and kept down the population within the range of tolerable existence. And the god of dirt and insanitation carried away the unneeded residue left by famine.

This is one of the very few great evils before which human power stands helpless. It is true, as we shall again see, that the government has done very much by irrigation schemes and by the building of railways to mitigate this evil. By famine funds and relief works it also strives, as it did in the last famine, to reduce the mortality and suffering arising from these seasons of drought. But the constant penury of the people and their ever living upon the verge of hunger and want, make it now impossible to save many

from the terrible result of the visitations. It is a comfort, however, to know that every year means progress in the matter, and tends, through large and conscientious efforts of the State, to make each succeeding famine less dreadful in aspect and result than the preceding one. Perhaps there is no other thing which occupies at present more of the time and thought of the imperial government than this. But to drive entirely away this gaunt demon from a land which is peculiarly liable to drought, and while the people are chronically unprepared to meet the least extra drain, is more than can be expected from any government.

It may not be out of place to mention here a difficulty of the Indian Government against which it has sometimes struggled in vain. This is a commercial one and arises from the conflicting interests of Great Britain and India. And it is also the direct result of allowing the British Parliament to subordinate the well-being of India to party interests and local commercial advantages. It must remain a disgrace to Great Britain, because a flagrant injustice to India, if she allows her legislation to be shaped and the hands of the Indian Government to be tied in response to the greed and at the beck of Lancashire manufacturers. The cotton interests of this land have more than once been thus sacrificed. And the Indian Government only recently protested against this injustice, and maintained, what is becoming more and more accepted in England, that the British Parliament must impose upon her great dependency no law or dictum which may in any way prove detrimental to its commercial interests. The Indian Government has certainly enough to contend with, without being subjected to such limitations from without.

J. P. JONES.

*(To be continued.)*